

Written statement of a key decision
Cabinet member environment, economy and skills

Title	Decision on arrangements for the Discretionary (Covid-19) Business Grant Fund
Decision maker	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills Information about cabinet, including the names and contact details of the cabinet members, can be found here: http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=251
Date of decision	12 June 2020
Report exemption class	Open
Reason for being a key decision	<p>This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.</p> <p>This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.</p>
A notice was served in accordance with Part 3 (Key decisions) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.	
General exception or special urgency (as defined in the constitution)	Yes
Purpose	<p>To approve expenditure and approach to delivering the Covid 19 Discretionary Grant Scheme.</p> <p>In May the government announced that it would provide Local Authorities with additional funding to target small businesses with high fixed property-related costs but that are not eligible for the current grant schemes.</p> <p>This decision considers the targeting and delivery of these additional funds.</p>

<p>Decision</p>	<p>That:</p> <p>(a) The cabinet member for Environment, Economy and Skills approves the expenditure (£3.2m) of government funding provided for the Covid 19 Herefordshire Discretionary Grant Fund.</p> <p>(b) The cabinet member for Environment, Economy and Skills approves the approach to delivering the Discretionary Grant scheme.</p> <p>(c) The Head of Economic Development and the Economic Development Manager be authorised to approve grant awards to businesses following satisfactory appraisal of the applications received (up to a value of £10,000 per business).</p>
<p>Reason for the decision</p>	<p>As set out in the report. Documents relating to this decision are available at</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50034212</p>
<p>Options considered</p>	<p>1. Do nothing - the council could choose to not deliver the Discretionary Grant scheme, however businesses severely impacted by Covid 19 would not receive the available support leading to increased risk of insolvency and loss of local employment.</p> <p>2. Open to wider business base - The government guidance states that Local Authorities can use their discretion to consider who should be eligible for the grant, but asks that councils prioritise small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment, Bed & Breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates, and charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief. The council could utilise its discretion to open the scheme to a wider business base. However, as only 5% (£3.2m) of additional funds are available, we would be unable to provide support to all of the businesses that could apply.</p> <p>3. Provide funding on a first come first served basis - The council could assess applications on a first come first served basis, providing funding to eligible businesses in the order they apply until the funds are exhausted. This would mean those businesses who were quickest to apply would receive the funding, potentially not supporting those in greatest need. The proposed approach to providing a time limited window (or windows if funds remain) provides all with an equal and fair chance to apply.</p>
<p>Declarations of interest (see below)</p>	

<p>Call-in expiry date (decisions are not subject to call-in where special urgency provisions apply)</p>	<p>This decision is to be taken under the special urgency provisions as set out in paragraphs 4.2.52-54 of the constitution of Herefordshire Council. It will not be subject to call in.</p>
--	---

<p>Councillor:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Date 12 June 2020</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cabinet member environment, economy and skills (Councillor Ellie Chowns)</p>
--

- a record of any conflict of interest declared by any executive member who is consulted by the member which relates to the decision;

and

- in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of dispensation granted.